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RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0374
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DHO-2/REA/NMJIC-J2//
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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: UNPRECEDENTED COOPERATION AND CAMARADERIE
AT THE IMAMNAZAR BORDER STATION OPENING

[1](#)1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

[1](#)2. (U) SUMMARY: The August 13 opening ceremony for the Imamnazar border station was a resounding success for U.S.-Turkmenistan relations, and in terms of outreach to the public. EEB Assistant Secretary Daniel Sullivan headed the U.S. delegation, which included

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high-level representatives from the U.S. Central Command and the Nevada National Guard. All Turkmen and Afghani speakers at the event emphasized the positive relationship between Turkmenistan and Afghanistan along with appreciation for the U.S. Government's contribution to border security and regional integration. State media's coverage was positive and extensive. The degree of cooperation from the government of Turkmenistan was unprecedented, as was the amount of food served the U.S. delegation. END SUMMARY.

ELABORATE CEREMONY IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

[1](#)3. (U) After months of planning and uncertainty, the government finally took an active role in organizing and participating in the formal August 13 ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Imamnazar border crossing, funded by CENTCOM and constructed under the supervision of the Nevada National Guard State Partnership program. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs spent several frantic days helping put together an elaborate ceremony for the opening of the Imamnazar border crossing station at the isolated and desolate border with Afghanistan. The government's efforts included clearing the newly repaved road (at least in sections) of all traffic for the 60-some convoy of U.S. and Turkmen vehicles that traveled four hours one way from the regional airport at Turkmenabat. The government of Turkmenistan expended significant efforts to handle the logistical challenges for a ceremony in such a remote location. The degree of coordination and cooperation with the embassy was unprecedented.

[1](#)4. (U) Attendees included multiple deputy ministers and agency heads from the government of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan's Ambassador to Turkmenistan and a contingent of Afghan border police representatives, as well as UNODC regional representative James Callahan.

[1](#)5. (U) There was some confusion about the order of speakers. However, all four U.S. representatives whom the embassy had requested be allowed to speak were granted time: A/S Sullivan as

the U.S. keynote speaker, the Charge, Rear Admiral Payne of CENTCOM, and Brigadier General Fitch of the Nevada National Air Guard.

KIND WORDS FROM THE GOVERNMENT

¶16. (U) The ceremony included remarks delivered by Myrat Islamov, Deputy Chair of the State Coordinating Council against Drug Addiction under the Cabinet of Ministers and Tagaymyrat Mammedov, the governor of Lebap Province. While both focused on their own government's anti-narcotics progress and assistance to Afghanistan, they also noted U.S. Government support for the border station building and equipment - one of the most public admissions of received assistance to date. They also emphasized Turkmenistan's hope for a strong bilateral relationship with the United States. State television's evening news broadcast on August 14 was lengthy, positive, and included that the project was funded by the United States.

KIND WORDS FROM AFGHANISTAN

¶17. (SBU) Afghan Ambassador Khaddam emphasized his country's thanks to the United States for ?injecting freedom and human rights? into Afghanistan. He also praised peaceful, cooperative relations with Turkmenistan and was thankful for electricity and other forms of support support from the Turkmen government. However, only the words of thanks to Turkmenistan made the evening news broadcast.

SULLIVAN PRAISES REGIONAL TRADE AND INTEGRATION

¶18. (U) State TV conducted an extensive interview with A/S Sullivan, going beyond the usual timid softball questions. When asked if trade and cooperation with the United States wouldn't violate Turkmenistan's neutrality, Sullivan answered that trade and cooperation with multiple partners enhances and reinforces Turkmenistan's neutrality. He noted it was not in Turkmenistan's

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interest to sell its goods or energy to only one or two buyers, but instead multiple trading partners would benefit Turkmenistan.

POSITIVE VIBES, A GOOD SHOW, AND MUCH TOO MUCH FOOD

¶18. (U) After the speeches and a tour of the new building, the government served lunch for about 500, including all the workers at the border post who had been given the day off. The lunch was accompanied by a full-scale variety show of actors, dancers, and singers, including a tenor from the opera performing "O Sole Mio." The camaraderie between the Turkmen and U.S. delegations was unprecedented. The government of Lebap Province pulled out all the hospitality stops, including breakfast when the U.S. delegation landed at Turkmenabat in the morning, and an elaborate dinner while waiting for the plane back to Ashgabat in the evening. Even the weather cooperated and was unexpectedly cool at Imamnazar where August daytime temperatures can hit 120 degrees.

¶19. (U) A/S Sullivan cleared this cable.

HOAGLAND